

The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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Now there's "room at the inn" —

Macao's Cradle of Hope born of abandoned babies' crisis

By Mark Kelly

MACAO (BP) — The baby's pitiful cry all but disappeared in the hubbub of a summer evening in Macao.

Cars sped up and down the narrow streets of the tiny Portuguese colony south of Hong Kong on China's coast. The rattle of mah-jongg tiles filtered out of the casinos into the humid night air, which was heavy with the odor of fish and garlic. A slight breeze carried the sounds of singing and laughter from the open doors of karaoke bars.

Only when the hour grew late

and the revelry died down did anyone notice the crying. As the plaintive wailing persisted, people became curious. As the tiny voice rose in screams of pain, they became concerned.

They found the child — a newborn boy — lying in a trash can. The bone of his elbow lay exposed where rats had gnawed away the flesh.

At the hospital, social workers named the infant "Nicholas" and began the all-too-familiar search for a family to adopt him.

Abandoned infants are nothing

new in Macao, according to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary Ruth Billett. Women from China come to the colony to work. When they want to return home, however, they have to leave their babies behind.

Finding adoptive parents usually isn't difficult, but Nicholas' deformed arm made him almost impossible to place, said Billett, who is from San Antonio, Texas. He had no place else to go; the local orphanage didn't take children under 3 years of age.

Then one of the social workers remembered Marjory Venderamini, a Brazilian Baptist missionary serving in Macao. Venderamini had applied for a government license to open a home for abandoned babies, but the approval process was endlessly complicated. She agreed to keep Nicholas in her own home until the orphanage could be opened.

What followed was a miracle. Local newspapers and television carried reports of Nicholas' plight, and Macao took the baby to heart. Civic groups held toy drives. Garment factories donated clothes. Grocery stores sent food and diapers. Chinese Christians and foreign missionaries from many denominations formed a board of directors for the orphanage.

Most remarkably, layers of red tape fell away and a government license was issued.

Cradle of Hope orphanage opened in May 1994 with Nicholas, four other infants and a broad base of support in the Christian community.

Southern Baptist missionaries in Macao played key roles in organizing the project, and local Baptist churches help support the orphanage with volunteers and donations, reported missionary Mary Dickey, training coordinator for Hope Medical Clinic. The clinic, run by missionaries, provides medical supplies and vitamins to the orphanage. Dickey trains volunteers to care for the children.

Cradle of Hope is funded primarily by the Macao government, which also coordinates its adoptions, said Dickey, of Medford, Okla. She hopes the orphanage eventually will be able to handle its own adoptions.

"We need people to pray that these babies end up with Christian families," she said. "Right now we have to pray them into Christian homes."

That's what happened to Nicholas. A Chinese Christian couple living in Sweden adopted him. Three other children also have been adopted, and four more now wait in the orphanage.

Because of its wide public support, Cradle of Hope plans to relocate to a larger facility soon, Billett said. Another project, a home for unwed mothers, also is planned.

"With abortion so readily available across the border in China, there must be some spark of hope and love in a mother who chooses not to destroy her child but give him up for adoption," she said. "We want to offer a safe haven to these mothers and share with them the message of the God of love."



CRADLE OF HOPE — This bundle of joy called Mirian, once an abandoned child, has safe shelter in the arms of loving Christians and missionaries until she finds adoptive parents. She lives at the Cradle of Hope. The orphanage was begun by a Brazilian missionary after she took in a baby found in a trash can.

Cradle of Hope, the missionary added, stands as testimony to a God who can break down all barriers — denominations, prejudice, even government red tape.

"And yet, for all his awesome power, he cares for each of us in a very real and personal way, even for one tiny baby screaming alone in the darkness."

Kelly writes for the FMB.



MOM AND DAD WANTED — John (left) and Lucas are waiting for new moms and dads at the Cradle of Hope orphanage in Macao, which was begun by Brazilian and Southern Baptist missionaries. Like other kids at the center, John and Lucas were abandoned at birth in the Portuguese colony on China's coast. The missionaries are praying for Christian adoptive parents for them. (BP photos by Roy Burroughs)

U.N. troops in Saucier?

Late-night televangelist Jack Van Impe's claim that United Nations troops and equipment are poised in Saucier, Miss., for a massive invasion and takeover of the U.S. is a fabrication, according to an investigation by the *Mobile (Ala.) Press-Register* newspaper. Van Impe's show, which features a look-alike TV news studio from which his blonde wife Rexella tosses him current event topics for extended commentary, is broadcast on at least one Mississippi station. *Church and State* magazine reported that when the *Mobile* newspaper pressed Van Impe for proof of the Saucier buildup, his office supplied photos of standard U.S. military equipment — one of which even had a U.S. government license plate. The magazine also said that Van Impe has claimed John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 to pave the way for one-world government and the return of the Antichrist. The *New American* magazine, which also conducted an investigation into the Saucier myth and several similar stories from around the country, concluded late last year that there was no reality to the reports.

Arkansas travelers

Members and leaders of the youth and children's class at Morgan City Church, Morgan City, attending The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, Ark., included (back, from left) Joseph Fowler, Steven Nichols, Connie Makamson, Steven Makamson, Jim Nestler, (front, from left) Sunshine Gardner, Kristi Neely, Carrie Hodges, Stephanie McClenic, Carolyn Nichols, Karen Makamson, Terri Fowler, and Emilie Hodges.



Looking Back...

10 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Foundation reports an increase in the foundation's total corpus for the 10th consecutive year, with Christian education drawing top support from donors across Mississippi and the country.

20 years ago

Mississippi Baptists garner more January Bible Study awards than any other state in the Southern Baptist Convention and also boast the best percentage participation in the program, according to the Baptist Sunday School Board.

50 years ago

Radio stations in Jackson and Columbus have agreed to broadcast the Baptist Hour's 1945 Centennial Crusade kick-off, in which Southern Baptists will be challenged to win 1,000,000 souls to Christ in the coming year.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Guy Henderson

Home Mission Board gets a hit

Strikeouts are not unknown, but the Home Mission Board managed a solid hit in the HMB/State Conventions Study Report.

A special committee had been authorized to study how the HMB "should cooperate in the future with state conventions that channel funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other non-SBC entities."

Like the study of the Masons, this was forced on the HMB and had all the makings of a fiasco. Some unwise words such as "investigate" and the possibility of "usurping the authority of state conventions" caused confusion. Someone had to "discomfort all Israel" while striking a paranoiac blow at the CBF.

Immediately it was an unpopular subject. Autonomy of Baptist bodies is well substantiated. Florida flared up in a strong message that they were not to investigate the HMB nor was the HMB to investigate Florida. Virginia, North Carolina, and Texas let their money do the talking and suddenly all of us were taking a second look.

The committee reported: "Mutu-

al trust is one of the major factors that has made Southern Baptists what we are today. Our relationship is based on our trust in God and each other. Southern Baptists strongly believe in the autonomy of the local church, association, state convention, and the SBC and its entities."

In the purpose statement the committee reported, "The joint roles of state conventions and the HMB in developing strategy are clearly established. The HMB and state conventions jointly develop local, regional, and national strategies to reach our nation for Jesus Christ."

None of these statements is new. The statements should have been studied by the HMB executive committee prior to making the original motion.

Fourteen recommendations were made, mostly in a general sense, but the wording was conciliatory. Thanks were expressed, partnerships invited, trust expressed to be needed, along with a pledge to build relationships.

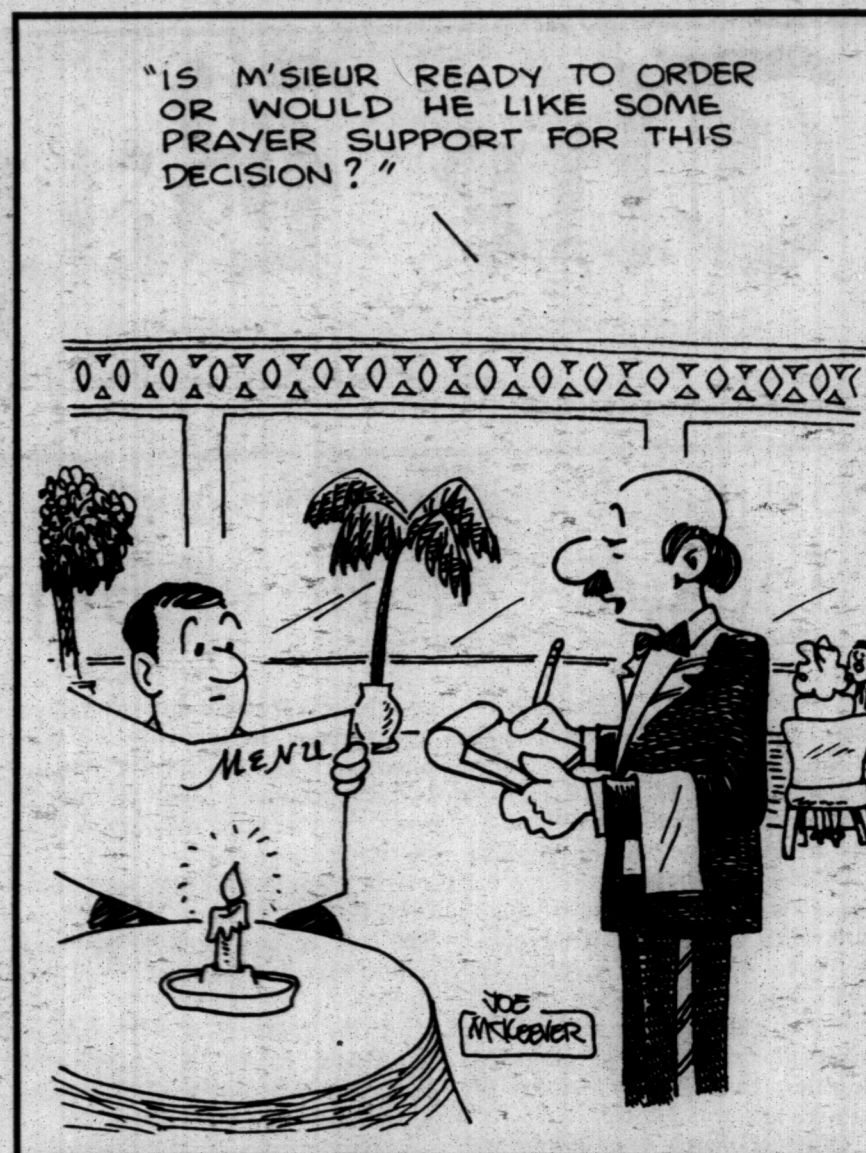
Finally we get to the heart of it:

"We acknowledge and support the autonomy of the state conventions/fellowships and the HMB, and we acknowledge the inappropriateness of either to attempt to usurp the autonomy of the other."

There was the affirming of the Cooperative Program and "we encourage giving primary support to those entities compatible with the SBC."

Note the word was "encourage" rather than "investigate" churches or states handling CBF funds. Those who use alternate channels for HMB support are "encouraged" to renew their support through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

The HMB will continue to cooperate with churches, associations, and state conventions in evangelism and affirmed their desire to cooperate fully in these ministries. The report actually majored on trying to get us back together rather than notching a victory in the controversy. This is a wise decision and we commend the HMB for this insight.



Guest Opinion...

Old and new hymns can minister

By Tanner Riley

There seems to be constant diversity of opinion between people of varying tastes about what is "good" church music these days. It seems, also, that everyone has an opinion about the matter, because everyone knows what they "like."

Some churches today are entirely abandoning the hymnal, singing only contemporary gospel and Scripture choruses because this is something new and exciting. Some churches are mixing the two with varying degrees of success.

My continuing concern for any vocal music used in the church is for the text. What does the song say? The musical "dress" in which it appears is a secondary issue.

A young adult friend of mine who graduated from a university and went to Nashville has made a place for herself in the recording industry. She and her husband, who is a well-known arranger, composer, and producer of contemporary Christian music, have continued to keep in touch, and from time to time we have exchanged correspondence over a period of a few years.

Let me remind you these are "yuppies" who are heavily involved in the contemporary Christian music scene. Last week

Leah called me, and after we exchanged a few warm greetings, with a catch in her voice, said, "Tanner, do you remember an old hymn we used to sing during my college days, something about, 'Jesus, I am resting...?'"

"Oh, yes," I said. "I remember the song. We glued copies of it inside the cover of all our hymnals so the church would have access to it."

She replied, "Well, I remember our singing it, and it has come to my mind because of a very difficult experience I am having right now." She explained to me something of the spiritual struggle that was going on in her life, and how she was searching for God's answer. It seemed that the Holy Spirit had prompted her memory of this song at a time when it was greatly needed.

I sent her a copy of the text because she did not have a copy of a hymnal that contains this particular song. I found it most interesting that in her vast knowledge of contemporary Christian songs there was not anything that met this particular need in her life. She found God speaking to her through the text of an old gospel hymn that she had heard and sung several years before, and the words had stuck in her mind, I

believe, through the work of the Holy Spirit so that the words would be there at the time of need in her life.

I suppose there will always be what I would call "temporary" or "disposable" Christian music in every generation. I have a deepening conviction that the solid hymns of the faith (and there are some written in every generation!) which contain so much of God's truth and of Christian theology and deep Christian experience, must be a part of our diet in every generation, also. We must teach the great hymns of the faith to our children, and we must continue to sing them even at a time when some are discarding them in a very casual way. (I also believe we must work at not being dull or boring in the use of hymns, but that is a matter for a whole additional epistle!)

I have received a blessing from some of the contemporary Christian songs. The little chorus, "As the Deer," is a marvelous expression from Scripture of one's spiritual need in prayer to God.

"I Love You, Lord," is another great contemporary Christian song, but I find none that match the assurance of "It Is Well With My Soul," or "I Know Whom I Have Believed," or "I Am Not

THE FRAGMENTS

It doesn't get any better than this?

"Tell the truth," she says, "could you trade this for anything?"

These are the words of Elaine Cohen, 73, in Atlantic City, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal* (Dec. 28, 1994).

"Elaine," as they call her in the Bally Grand Casino, gambles about three days per week. Last year, she lost \$30,000 of her savings. She is not a wealthy person but sees the casino as her "home."

Two days each week she is a volunteer worker at a center for

retarded adults. Twice a year she takes the patients to the Grand "to play the slots." The hotel picks up the lunch check and annually makes a donation to the center. After all, what are friends for?

"Could you trade this for anything?" Elaine's life savings are expected to last her five more years. Her daughter will have to take care of her after that. Elaine is a caring, loving person. I think most of us would like her. It's a pity she has not found the liberating power of the gospel. — GH

Skilled to Understand" — or some of the wonderful expressions of love like "Fairest, Lord Jesus"; or the song of ever-fresh commitment, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

These, and many others, minister in a way that is unique. I assure you that if you live very long as a Christian, you are going to come to a crisis time in your life, and you are going to need all the spiritual resources you can lay your hands on. I am convinced that God will take the truths of Scripture and the truths of the hymns we sing, which have stood

the test of use and of time, and minister to you in a way that nothing else can.

I personally find great encouragement in realizing that a hymn that ministers to me has already ministered to literally thousands of Christians who have gone before me.

Let's use what is best in contemporary music, but let us cling tenaciously to those hymn texts which can minister so deeply to our lives and will make us more like our lovely Lord Jesus!

Riley is minister of music, First Church, Starkville.

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Texas conservatives discuss funding of state, SBC causes

FORT WORTH (BP) — The Conservative Baptist Fellowship of Texas took on a new name and talked about new directions in missions giving but gave only bare mention to the question of forming a new state convention at a rally in Fort Worth Jan. 10.

About 300 people attended the meeting at the Radisson Plaza Hotel following the Tuesday evening session of the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference.

Previously known as the Conservative Baptist Fellowship of Texas, it will now be known as "Southern Baptists of Texas," according to Miles Seaborn, chairman.

Seaborn, pastor of Birchman Church, Fort Worth, said they were "in the process of reorganizing and restating our name and redefining our board of directors."

Four to six regional meetings will be held during the year, a newsletter will be distributed and "we are talking to people about being candidates" for office at the state convention in San Antonio next fall, Seaborn said.

He is constantly asked if they are planning to start a new state convention, Seaborn said, but he gave no definitive answer, saying only he had spoken to a "national leader" who had urged the group "to make sure your heart is for missions and evangelism" and had said the "Southern Baptist organization is open to you."

Seaborn said the organization

was given permission by SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chapman to use the SBC logo. Chapman told the Texas Baptist newsjournal **Baptist Standard** the guidelines for use of the logo give "wide latitude" for its use by organizations in friendly cooperation with the SBC.

Focus of the 90-minute meeting was on how churches could direct their missions giving in light of the convention action in Amarillo last fall broadening the definition of what constitutes a Cooperative Program gift.

Although the action in Amarillo requires no church to change its method of supporting the Texas Baptist and Southern Baptist conventions, the conservatives resent the new provision that support of the BGCT alone or support of the BGCT and other "worldwide Baptist missions and ministries" such as the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship also qualify as Cooperative Program gifts.

Some reportedly are considering redirecting their missions gifts around the state convention to the SBC Executive Committee or giving only minimal support to the state convention and the rest to the SBC.

Seaborn and Ronnie Yarber, vice chairman and pastor of Gross Road Church of Mesquite, Texas, said 750 to 800 churches or individuals had made inquiries about what direction to take.

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Clarke purchase falters as January 3 deadline expires

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Plans to sell the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Clarke College campus in Newton to a film-making group failed to materialize Jan. 3 when Deep South Film Institute, Inc., missed a 60-day deadline extension to purchase the property for \$1,000,000.

The special committee appointed by the convention to liquidate the defunct junior college will convene soon to discuss a course of action, according to committee chairman Larry Otis of Tupelo.

"Deep South Film Institute did not provide the \$1,000,000 required to buy the Clarke College property as authorized by the Mississippi Baptist Convention during their annual meeting last November. The convention allowed the institute's representatives 60 additional days to provide the necessary funds for the purchase, and the 60-day limit expired on Jan. 3," Otis said.

Investors led by Jim Shepherd of Ridgeland hoped to provide "a wholesome atmosphere to teach HDTV (high definition) technology while filming feature films,

programs, and documentaries that promote family values," according to the proposal submitted last year to the special committee by attorney David Valentine of Ridgeland.

The institute's proposal also predicted that more than 100 employees would be needed as

instructors, teaching assistants, administrative/management, studio personnel, darkroom assistants, technical assistants, and publicity managers.

Shepherd and Valentine did not return telephone calls before the newspaper's publication deadline on the morning of Jan. 17.



Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board inspect Clarke College property on a rainy day in 1992, prior to a \$1,000,000 purchase offer from Deep South Film Institute, Inc. (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

Southwestern awaits ATS decision: most expect probation

FORT WORTH (ABP) — It won't be official until the end of January, but most faculty and administrators at Southwestern Seminary expect the seminary to be placed on probation by at least one of the school's two accrediting agencies.

Officials of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, who visited the Fort Worth campus late last year, recommended the seminary

receive probation because of violations stemming from the March 9 firing of President Russell Dilday, seminary sources say.

Southwestern's faculty is deeply troubled over perceived threats to academic freedom, according to a survey conducted for ATS.

Three-fourths said they fear the academic freedom of faculty members will be violated in the near future, and that the seminary

won't defend them (74.7%).

While most faculty members said their own academic freedom is unscathed so far (73.1%), two-thirds said the freedom of some faculty members has already been violated (67.2%).

Seminary leaders say the election of Ken Hemphill, the seminary's new president, last July signals the school is on the road to recovery. Indeed, most faculty members approve of Hemphill's election, even though he lacks the ties to Southwestern they said were important.

The survey, which was repeated twice after Hemphill's July election, showed 64.2% of faculty members approve of Hemphill's selection.

But that has not alleviated faculty concerns about the future of the school. In fact, their confidence in academic freedom has weakened between May, when the survey was initially taken, and November, when it was taken a final time.

While most said in May they felt free to teach and investigate truth (58.5%), in November a slight majority said that freedom no longer existed (50.7%). While 72% said in May they felt free to express their conscientious con-

victions, only 47.7% felt that confidence in November.

And 59.6% said statements in the faculty manual which are intended to protect academic freedom won't be enough to guarantee freedom at Southwestern.

Most faculty members blame trustees for the instability at the seminary. In the most recent survey, 88.1% said trustees are not acting responsibly in guiding the seminary. And 89.6% said trustees are not accurately representing the seminary's situation.

The November survey also asked for confidential comments from faculty members regarding the six problems cited by ATS. Several said the only way to restore the school's integrity is for the trustees to resign en masse. Others called for the trustees to apologize to Dilday and the seminaries' constituents.

But a few faculty members said Dilday's firing, though disruptive, was not an abuse of power. "Dr. Dilday's termination was certainly handled poorly but was not outside the trustees' stated authority," one noted.

"Our only protection for academic freedom is gone as of March 9," wrote one teacher.

"We have been placed in an academic straitjacket," wrote another. But one said, "There are no evidences that academic freedom and integrity are threatened."

On another topic, 91% of faculty members said they are apprehensive about the seminary's financial stability. A drop in enrollment and the loss of some donors since Dilday's firing have hurt the school.

Enrollment fell by 204 students last fall. Students are currently enrolling for the spring term and another drop is expected, but final figures won't be available for several weeks.

Enrollment losses can cost the seminary dearly. Southwestern receives about \$2,600 a year from the Southern Baptist Convention for each student, and students pay an average of \$1,800 a year for tuition.

The Southwestern team that presented their case to ATS Jan. 6 included Hemphill, Scotty Gray, the seminary's executive vice president; William Tolar, vice president for academic affairs; trustee chairman Ralph Pulley, a Dallas attorney; and James Draper, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board and former trustee chairman.

Ecrú anti-school prayer mother adds injunction to lawsuit

A motion for a preliminary injunction to immediately halt prayers and devotionals in Pontotoc County schools was added January 10 to a mother's federal lawsuit against the school system.

Lisa Herdahl of Ecrú, who has five children attending North Pontotoc Attendance Center in Ecrú, complained that prayers and devotionals have continued to be transmitted over the school's classroom intercom system even though she filed her lawsuit in late December 1994 to stop the practice.

Pontotoc County school superintendent Jerry Horton, member of Ecrú Church, Ecrú, and one of the defendants in Herdahl's lawsuit, has said he believes the student-led morning devotionals are constitutional and beneficial to students. He has also promised a strong court defense of the practice.

No hearing dates have been announced for the injunction or the full lawsuit. School officials have 20 days to respond to the injunction request.



Focus on children

Diana Garland (front row, center), dean of the Carver School of Social Work at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., was guest speaker at the Wednesday evening service at First Church, Clinton, Jan. 4. Author of *Precious in His Sight*, Garland was also featured speaker at the second annual Children's Prayer Breakfast on Jan. 5 at First Church, Jackson. Garland was joined at the breakfast by (from left) front row, Bill Baker, pastor of First, Clinton; Elizabeth K. Holmes, consultant for women's and children's issues, Christian Action Commission, Mississippi Baptist Convention; back row, Jane Boykin, president of the Mississippi Forum on Children and Families (MFCF); and Alfrenett Johnson-Orr, family-child care coordinator, MFCF. The Children's Prayer Breakfast was organized by MFCF with support from Kids Count Mississippi and Mississippi's religious community.

Bill proposed to establish commission on gambling

WASHINGTON (BP) — Congress will establish a panel to study the impact of gambling in the United States, if a representative from Virginia has his way.

Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., announced Jan. 10 he will introduce a bill to form the National Gambling Impact and Policy Commission for the purpose of compiling information on gambling's effect on economics, crime, families, and individuals.

The United States is on a "gambling binge," Wolf said. "This is an issue of national economic importance, and I believe the new Congress should examine it closely over

the coming months."

The commission, he said, should review the cost and effectiveness of federal and state regulations, gambling's impact on other businesses, the influence of gambling promoters on the development of policies regulating gambling, the relationship between gambling and crime, teenage gambling, and the effect of pathological gambling on individuals, families, and social institutions.

The commission also should propose whether gambling operations on Indian lands should be regulated by the states, not just the federal government, he said.

Editor warns of postage hike from "Contract with America"

WASHINGTON (BP) — Postal rates have just jumped almost 23% for nonprofit mailers, such as churches, state Baptist newspapers, and other religious publications.

But if one item in the "Contract with America" — now being debated in Congress — is adopted, rates will rise another 22-23%, according to Bob Terry, editor of *Word & Way*, the state Baptist newsjournal of Missouri.

The item of concern in the Contract with America calls for "reform of financing of future federal retiree benefits," said Terry, who serves on the Mailers' Technical Advisory Committee (MTAC), a group of mailers that meets quarterly with the senior management of the United States Postal Service (USPS).

The proposed reform would require the USPS to make advance payments totaling \$11 billion to the federal government to fund the next five years of USPS retiree benefits, Terry said.

Advocates of the reform say it would reduce the federal budget deficit by requiring the USPS to "pre-fund" its retirement benefits, Terry said.

That's quite a contrast to the present arrangement, in which the USPS pays retiree benefits to the federal government on a "pay as you go" basis — "or as the obligations come due," said Terry, who represents a broad-based coalition of religious publishers, including Southern Baptists, on MTAC.

"The Postmaster General has said if (the reform is enacted), they will immediately file for another postal rate increase," Terry said, because all benefits for USPS retirees are provided by postal revenues — not from tax revenues.

A press release from the Washington-based Alliance of Non-profit Mailers disputes that the reform can actually accomplish

federal budget deficit reduction. The release quotes from a letter by Robert Reischauer, director of the Congressional Budget Office: "Over the long run, however, pre-funding would merely shift the timing of certain receipts and would not reduce the deficit."

It's not only nonprofit mailers, but all postal consumers who will likely be impacted by the rate increase, Terry said. He said the cost of a first-class stamp could jump to 35 cents by the end of 1995 if the reform is enacted. (Stamps rose from 29 cents to 32

cents on Jan. 1 of this year.)

Terry urges concerned Baptists and others to contact their congressmen and senators in Washington and urge them not to vote for the part of the Contract with America that calls for "reform of financing for future federal retiree benefits."

The steep increase on Jan. 1 in nonprofit postal rates was a surprise, since the USPS board of governors had requested a much smaller increase from the Postal Rate Commission (PRC), Terry said.

Churches can save money in link with state papers

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP) — How can local churches cope with shrinking budgets and rising postal rates?

Bob Terry has a suggestion: back pages of state Baptist newspapers. Many newsjournals of state Baptist conventions provide a church newsletter service on their back pages, noted Terry, who is editor of *Word & Way*, the Baptist newsjournal in Missouri.

Under a typical plan, a participating church sends the state paper to its church members, and the church newsletter is printed on the back page of the paper. Subscribers whose churches don't participate receive a back page prepared by the state newspaper staff — often feature stories that don't relate to high-profile or critical news stories.

For a church that already subscribes to the state newspaper for its members, the back-page plan saves the church the cost of mailing its newsletters by piggybacking the newsletter on the back page of the paper.

"I think (rising postal rates) ought to increase the partnership between churches, associations, and state Baptist papers," Terry

said. "When a local church sends a mailout, it pays a per-piece cost and a weight cost. If the church and state paper were working together in partnership, there would only be one per-piece charge."

"You could eliminate the postage being paid by the local church, have more efficient delivery, and better Christian stewardship. I do not think we honor the Lord when we adopt structures, when we send more money to the post office, when we could partner with other Baptist entities," Terry said.

The cost for a church to communicate with its members is "going out of sight," he said. "Every time we have to take a dollar and put it toward postal rates, it comes out of the Cooperative Program, ministries, Bibles, Christian literature, or social ministry. It's a dollar that's going to postage (instead)."

"I think that's a real problem in a society where we're talking about growing personal accountability and responsibility," Terry said.

(Note: *The Baptist Record* uses the front page rather than the back page.)

Author pulls Joshua commentary over disputes with BSSB editors

BELTON, Texas (ABP) — The author of a commentary on the book of Joshua has withdrawn his upcoming volume in the New American Commentary series because of disputes with editors at the Baptist Sunday School Board (BSSB).

The author, Stephen Wyrick, said he made the decision after recent discussions with editors in which "it became clear they weren't going to be happy" with the book. "The methodologies I desired to employ during the research and writing and the methodologies they desire to be employed are irreconcilable," said Wyrick, a religion professor at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor in Belton, Texas.

Among concerns raised by editors are his dating of the events described in Joshua and his treatment of disputed texts, he said.

The 40-volume commentary

set, authorized by BSSB trustees in 1987, is designed to espouse an inerrantist view of Scripture. The Nashville-based BSSB's last major commentary, the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, was published in the 1970s and is sometimes criticized as too liberal for the tastes of fundamental-conservative trustees who now hold sway at the board and other agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The original general editor, Michael Smith, resigned in 1990 to become a pastor. He was replaced by David Dockery, who stepped aside two years later when he accepted a deanship at Southern Seminary. In 1992, trustees elected Criswell College's Ray Clendenen the new general editor, causing one consulting editor to resign in protest.

Some observers say the recent disputes with writers indicate the

board is moving away from a traditional commitment to mainstream conservative scholarship to cater to a more fundamentalist approach.

Board officials, however, dispute that, pointing out that while such rejections are rare, they are not unprecedented.

Wyrick said he ran into problems with Clendenen and other commentary editors over the dating of Israel's conquest of Palestine and issues raised by recent textual studies and archeological finds.

Wyrick said he believes the conquest took place in the 13th century before Christ, a dating accepted by most scholars and "pretty much what I have encountered during the years" while an undergraduate student at Dallas Baptist University and a master's and a doctoral student at Southwestern Seminary.

BSSB editors, however, relying on a literal reading of a verse in I Kings, insist on a 15th century dating, he said.

I Kings 6:1 reports the exodus came 480 years before the construction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, which most scholars place in the early 10th century. A literal interpretation, therefore, pushes the date for Joshua's escapades into the 15th century.

But many scholars do not interpret the number literally. "There are other texts in the Bible that seem to indicate other possible dates," Wyrick said. Chronicles dates the exodus 12 generations before the temple. "Many conservative scholars would argue that the 480 years in I Kings 6:1 is a reference to 12 generations, and generations were oftentimes reckoned as 40 years in the Old Testament.... It's a matter of interpretation what do

you do with I Kings 6:1," he said.

Wyrick said he also places the writing of the book of Joshua later than the BSSB editors. "I placed the dating in the period of the monarchy. Some want to place it in the period of the judges," he said.

Wyrick did much of the research for the commentary during a recent sabbatical at the Albright Institute of Archeology in Jerusalem. Clendenen, he said, has stated he does not want much attention given to archeology.

BSSB trustees voted to publish the commentary in 1987, overriding a committee recommendation that discouraged the venture by citing low market demand and fear of controversy. The trustees specified that the commentary must defend traditional authorship of biblical books and that all writers "hold to the position of inerrancy."

More proposals dropped into '95 legislative hopper

By Paul G. Jones II and Elizabeth K. Holmes

The following bills were filed in the Mississippi Legislature between Jan. 6-12, and are a continuation of the list of bills from the previous week's listing in **The Baptist Record**:

Church/state

SB (Senate Bill) 2243 provides that students who are at licensed child care facilities for four or fewer hours a day shall not be counted as children at those facilities for any purpose under the licensure law, and provides that such exemption shall be allowed only if the facility provides care to fewer than 15 of those children.

Criminal justice

HB (House Bill) 687 and 701 authorizes warrantless searches for drugs and weapons on school property.

HB 746 conforms fondling laws with sexual battery laws.

HB 780 provides for enforced penalties for gang-related criminal activities.

HB 795 authorizes a judge to sentence violators of certain controlled substances to rehabilitation instead of prison.

HB 810 creates a state-assisted county jail construction program using revenue from state gambling fees.

HB 854 prohibits the manufacture, transfer, and possession of assault weapons.

HB 875 creates the civil rights division in the office of the Attorney General.

HB 878 eliminates the death penalty for a capital offense by any youth or child under the age 18.

HB 890 eliminates the death penalty for the mentally retarded.

HB 889 allows sexual abuse as a child as a mitigating circumstance in capital sentencing cases.

SB 2205 provides that if a student athlete is found guilty of weapons possession while participating in school athletic activities, the school and the student shall be disqualified from further participation in that sport.

SB 2326 requires registration of firearms and imposes specific provisions for the registration of weapons.

SB 2330 imposes enhanced penalties for the use of armor piercing ammunition during the commission of the crimes of violence or drug trafficking, and prohibits parole for a person convicted under this act.

SB 2332 provides that the sale of weapons to minors shall be a felony, and provides for a fine and imprisonment for such sale. It also provides

penalties for minors who illegally possess firearms.

SB 2358 prohibits the giving of weapons as prizes at carnivals, circuses, fairs, and like concerns and organizations to any person less than 21 years of age.

Drugs

HB 625 allows the manufacturer of beer to determine if alcoholic content is listed on labels in terms of either weight or volume.

HB 655 and 864 assert that certain acts which are unlawful for the holder of a permit authorizing the sale of beer or light wine are also unlawful if committed by an employee of the permit holder.

SB 2242 prohibits the holder of a permit authorizing the retail sale of beer or light wine from allowing the consumption of beer or light wine on the retail premises after the hours it is legally open for business.

SB 2437 provides that an applicant for a permit to sell light wine or beer must be a resident of Mississippi and that the designated manager of the licensed premises must be a resident of Mississippi.

HB 639 and 843 provide that it shall be unlawful to operate a water craft under the influence of alcohol, and that any operator of a water craft shall be assumed to have given implied consent for blood alcohol content testing.

SB 2293 adds public housing developments to list of drug-free zones where sale or possession of drugs within 1500 feet results in enhanced penalties.

HB 691 creates the offense of trafficking in controlled substances.

HB 703 establishes a drug testing/rehabilitation program for public school students.

HB 743 grants limited police powers to agents and inspectors of the Alcoholic Beverage Control division.

HB 745 creates the offense of reckless endangerment of an unborn child for mothers who use illegal drugs.

SB 2277 amends state law to impose penalties for the use of cocaine during the last trimester of pregnancy.

SB 2217 amends state law to impose penalties for the use of certain controlled substances during pregnancy.

HB 823 authorizes the use of trap and trace devices and caller IDs by the Bureau of Narcotics.

Education

HB 741 creates the "Blind Persons' Literacy Rights and Education Act."

HB 793 and 799 authorizes school districts to employ attendance officers and study the feasibility of incorporating attendance requirements in the performance-based accreditation system.

HB 894 and HCR (House Concurrent Resolution) 46 create a permanent higher education trust fund derived from gambling taxes.

SB 2299 provides tuition to all needy, qualified, college-bound state residents.

SB 2354 establishes a Motivating Parents and Children (MPAC) pilot program within the State Department of Education for the purpose of making grants to school districts that provide parental involvement services to families of compulsory-school-age children.

Family

HB 650 provides that sexual abuse of any child shall be grounds

for termination of parental rights.

HB 654 provides that law enforcement officers may detain an offending party for a spousal abuse charge.

HB 699 creates the "Uniform Premarital Agreement Act."

HB 707 relates to exploitation of children and prohibits the possession of materials which sexually exploit children.

HB 718 provides for equitable division of marital property.

SB 2216 requires licensure of certain individuals who use the title of Marriage and Family Therapy in the state of Mississippi, and creates the Mississippi Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure Board.

SB 2227 provides that persons age 18 or older may marry without parental permission.

SB 2274 provides that determination of the best interests of a child in custody matters is to be made without regard to the gender of the parent or parents seeking custody.

SB 2368 authorizes the Mississippi Department of Human Services to expand its private entity child support collection pilot program into additional Mississippi counties.

Gambling

HB 779 removes prohibitions on conducting sports pools for the wagering on sporting events aboard cruise vessels.

SB 2248 expands the list of highway improvement projects eligible for funding from the gaming counties state assisted infrastructure fund.

SB 2335 prohibits gaming in waters adjacent to the three most southern counties of Mississippi that lie adjacent to areas which were zoned for commercial use on June 29, 1990, and which are not zoned for residential use.

Safety

HB 641 provides that it is unlawful for any person under age 18 to ride in or upon any portion of a vehicle not designed for transportation of passengers.

HB 642 modifies the mandatory motor vehicle seat belt law to allow prosecution for violation even if no other offense is applicable.

Other

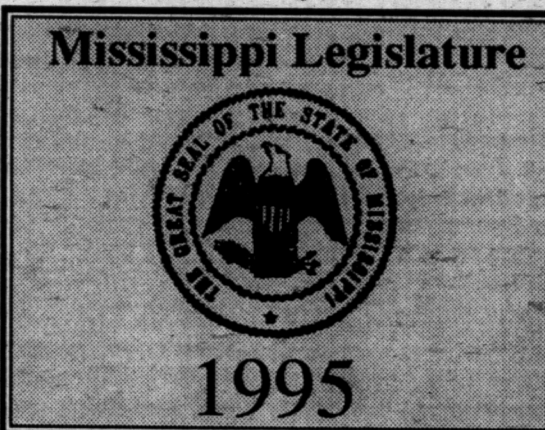
SB 2240 revises the protection accorded under the Good Samaritan Statute.

SB 2261 specifies and defines sexual harassment in employment, training, or education as a civil rights violation, and provides a civil penalty.

Senators and representatives can be reached in Jackson during the session: Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215. Telephone: (601) 359-3770.

For more information, contact the Christian Action Commission (CAC) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800, or (800) 748-1651.

Jones is CAC executive director. Holmes is CAC consultant for family and women's issues.



HB 638 provides that a person selling alcoholic beverages, light wine, and beer to a minor shall be fined not less than \$1,500 and not more than \$50,000, and that the permit to sell shall be revoked for one year.

Youths need challenge, not entertainment

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP) — Church leaders today are "under-challenging" youths, according to author Henry Blackaby, who said they are offering entertainment and road trips instead of godly challenges.

Church leaders "are saying, 'Let's go swimming' or 'Let's go to Six Flags,' 'Let's watch videos or listen to music,'" said Blackaby, author of the popular resource,

Experiencing God, and consultant for revival and spiritual awakening for the Home and Foreign Mission boards and Baptist Sunday School Board.

"The greatest tragedy in churches today is that we are under-challenging our youth. I've never seen any age group that responds more deeply with greater sacrifice than teenagers," Blackaby said.

"Somehow (church leaders) feel they can't put anything heavy on teens, and that's just not true. Teens are waiting for that. They are waiting for someone to know they are capable of more than just being baby-sat," Blackaby said.

Blackaby was speaker at the first-ever Experiencing God Youth Celebration, Dec. 27-29 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center. About 2,000 youths and youth leaders packed Spillman Auditorium at Ridgecrest to hear Blackaby, according to Clyde Hall, manager of the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division youth section, which sponsored the event.

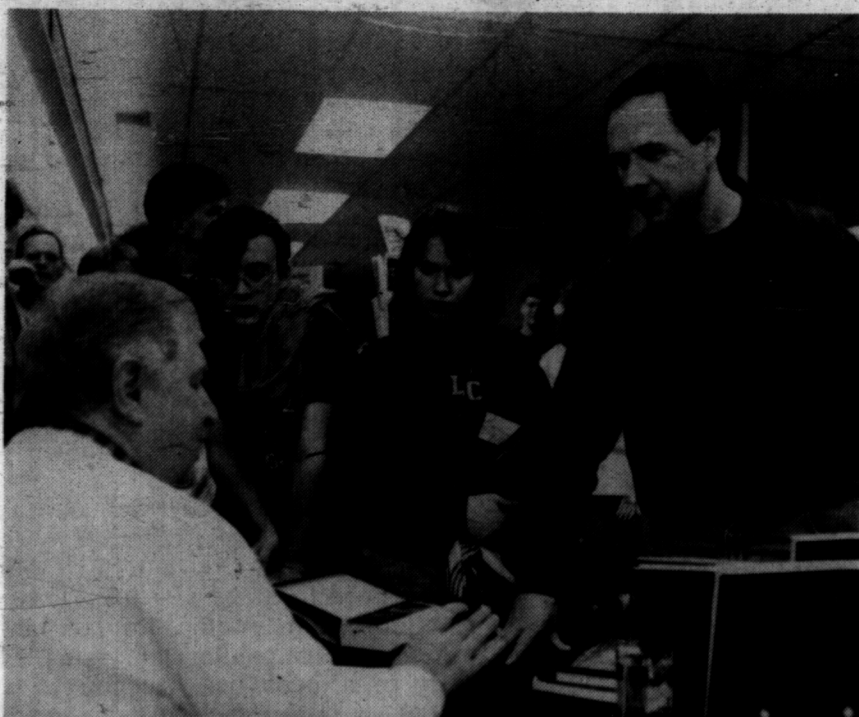
"This may well be the last generation God calls extensively to take the good news to all nations," said Blackaby, who said he believes Jesus will return before this generation of young people breathes its last breath.

"This generation that's living could well be alive when the Lord returns, and I'm afraid unless we take action now they will be just as disoriented to the second coming as the people in biblical times were to the first coming."

Blackaby said the entire church body — not just the youth director — is responsible for equipping young people for the task of taking the gospel to the world.

Youths are hungry for passion in life, he said. "Because church leaders have lost their passion, youth turn to rock stars and music, a medium that is full of passion."

With direction, Blackaby said, young people could channel their passion into God's work.



RIDGECREST, N.C. — Henry Blackaby (left), author of **Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God** and consultant for revival and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission, Foreign Mission, and Baptist Sunday School boards, signs autographs for a long line of conference participants who purchased his book. About 2,000 young people and adult leaders attended the first Experiencing God Youth Celebration at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center, Dec. 27-29. From right are: Craig Rickhart and Christine Ford, Parkview Church, Alexandria, La.; and Joel Counce, First Church, Booneville. (Photo by Terri Lackey)

Preserving "truth and conviction..."

Abstract of Principles provides theological accountability

By R. Albert Mohler Jr.

The question of theological accountability is the most pressing issue before Southern Baptists as they relate to their seminaries. All other issues pale in significance to this: Will the seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention truly and eagerly reflect the evangelical faith, doctrine, and piety of Southern Baptist churches?



Mohler

The question is hardly new to this denomination, though recent controversies have sounded alarm bells and aroused the attention of the churches. From the onset, Southern Baptists were properly and responsibly concerned to protect the theological integrity of their seminaries.

Southern Baptists did not hastily enter the field of seminary education. Indeed, the establishment of the Southern Seminary in 1859 came 14 years after the formation of the Convention. The seminary came into existence only when the leading Baptist statesmen of the era put their lives, fortunes, and reputations on the line for the training of ministers. From the onset, it was determined that Southern Seminary would be a confessional institution — it would hold all who teach accountable to a statement of faith which stipulated the theological boundaries.

The place of confessions in history

For nearly 2,000 years, Christians have expressed faith and doctrine through confessions of faith. In many cases, the confession or creed emerged out of the defense of the faith against heresy and error. The believing church said "no" to doctrinal error and "yes" to the truth of the gospel.

As one modern theologian states, confessions are "exercises in drawing boundaries" as the church affirms its best understanding of biblical truth and defends the orthodox consensus of the church. Baptist confessions have emerged from the same impulse, and despite wishful thinking and revisionism from some quarters, Baptists are a confessional people. "The Baptist Faith and Message" is perhaps our best-known confession, adopted in 1925 and 1963.

The renunciation of confessions

Frank Stagg, who taught at both New Orleans and Southern seminaries, now decries the "bondage" of Baptist confessionalism ("Theological institutions and the J.P. Boyce legacy," *The Baptist Record*, Jan. 5). He correctly traced the roots of Southern Seminary's confession to James Petigru Boyce, the towering

founder of the seminary, who made the insistence upon theological integrity absolutely clear.

In framing the seminary's identity, Boyce stipulated that the seminary must be established upon clear doctrinal principles. Only then would the seminary receive and deserve the support of the churches. Thus, fidelity to the Abstract of Principles serves as the contractual obligation for all who teach at Southern Seminary. It is a condition of employment that all who teach here do so "in accordance with and not contrary to" the Abstract.

The roots of the Abstract of Principles

The Abstract is rooted in historic Baptist confessions, traced from London to Philadelphia to Charleston. It is a summary of biblical truth and Baptist conviction. It remains unchanged since the founding of the school in 1859. It was, as Boyce stated, "based upon principles and practices sanctioned by the authority of Scripture and the usage of our people."

Boyce asserted that this confessional requirement was no burden to one who would teach ministers through the seminary. "It is no hardship to those who teach here to be called upon to sign the declaration of their principles," he insisted, and those who saw such a requirement as a burden could teach elsewhere.

Furthermore, and to Stagg's consternation, Boyce also demanded that those who sign the Abstract do so without condition or reservation: "No difference, however slight, no peculiar sentiments, however speculative is here allowable. His agreement with the standard should be exact. His declaration of it should be based upon no mental reservation, upon no private

understanding with those who immediately invest him in office; but the articles to be taught being distinctively laid down, he should be able to say from his knowledge of the Word of God that he knows these articles to be an exact summary of the truth laid down therein."

Put simply, this means that everyone who signs the Abstract is voluntarily

to affirm that those statements are precisely what Scripture teaches, and what he or she will teach. There may be no mental reservation. Should the teacher hesitate or be in any way reluctant, he or she should not sign the document nor teach at this seminary.

Amazingly, Stagg argued that this has not been the case for many years. In his words, "Through most of Southern Seminary's years, professors were permitted to sign the Abstract of Principles as they interpreted it, contrary to Boyce's demand." Stagg clearly argues that this should be the case — that professors should hold the Abstract under their own

judgment, rather than to hold themselves to the Abstract as required by their contract.

Thus, the Abstract is reduced to a bit of theological wishful thinking. The professor is free to "interpret" the Abstract according to his or her preferences. This is the theological doublespeak. It is a dishonest perversion of a contractual pledge. This is an act of consummate arrogance. It is, as even a child can understand, a lie. To sign a confession while reinterpreting its meaning is no different than a child making a promise while crossing fingers.

We should commend

Stagg's honesty in making his case. In his written works and in his classroom lectures, he rejected the Abstract's clear statement in favor of his own doctrinal positions. On issues ranging from the Trinity to the nature of the atonement, Stagg reinterpreted to the point of reversal. He discarded the classical orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as outdated. He dismissed Christ's substitutionary atonement as cruel and bloody. The very notion of unconditional election was dismissed out of hand. The faith held by generations of Southern Baptists — the faith represented by the Abstract of Principles — was repudiated in favor of Stagg's own system of doctrine.

Stagg raises the cases of Crawford Howell Toy and William H. Whitsitt — but he does not come close to telling the whole story. Whitsitt was not "forced out" of the seminary on the basis of the Abstract; indeed, he was a defender of the confession. The issues related to his resignation had nothing to do with the Abstract.

Toy, on the other hand, is perhaps the clearest example of why the Abstract is necessary. His resignation was sought in 1879 when it was determined that his liberal positions on the nature and authority of the Bible were in conflict with the Abstract's clear assertion of biblical inspiration. As President John R. Sampey noted many years later, the entire faculty stood together in painful agreement that Toy must go.

Stagg also fails to mention that within just a few weeks of Toy's departure, Toy had repudiated the Christian faith and joined the Unitarian Church. Stagg mourns his departure. I am thankful to God that the seminary's trustees and faculty were unified in demanding his resignation.

"The Seminary Creed"

Our founders did not hesitate to stand upon the confessions they adopted, nor to put their reputations at stake in their pledge. They were not intimidated by those who accused them of "creedalism,"

and they published the Abstract of Principles under the title, "The Seminary Creed."

Stagg seeks to confuse the issue by injecting Calvinism and the role of women in the church. The Abstract is a Reformed statement of Baptist conviction. It testifies

clearly to the sovereignty of God and his saving purpose. It truthfully reflects the doctrinal convictions of those who founded the Southern Baptist Convention. This was the doctrinal substance which launched this great missionary people. For that we offer no apology. These convictions formed the evangelical and biblical grounding for this great denomination of evangelistic churches.

The Abstract does not speak to the issue of women in the church. To raise that issue in this context was an attempt to distract attention from the Abstract's clear demands for theological accountability.

Southern Seminary stands behind its commitment to the highest standards of Christian scholarship. Stagg evidently thinks that genuine scholarship and theological accountability are incompatible. This notion is an insult to the church, and it indicates the idolatry of the secular academic establishment which has seduced generations of Southern Baptist intellectuals.

The seminary must be accountable

True Christian scholarship is scholarship in defense of the truth of the gospel — not at its expense. We should pay heed to the admonition of the apostle Paul that we preach and teach "no other gospel" than that preached by the apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Stagg asserts that "Creeds like the Abstract of Principles survive only by arbitrary power." Perhaps so, but not in the sense Stagg intends. It is the power of the churches to hold their institutions accountable. On the other hand, theological integrity survives only by personal and institutional loyalty to our public pledge to teach within the confession we voluntarily sign.

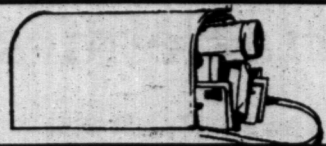
Southern Baptists seeking to understand the last 15 years of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention should pay close heed to Stagg's article. There are few threats more perilous for the evangelical church than theological seminaries set adrift from theological accountability. By God's grace Southern Baptists must hold their institutions and those who teach therein to our public pledge — to our confessions of faith.

Boyce warned almost 140 years ago that "a crisis in Baptist doctrine is evidently approaching." Little did he know how sadly prophetic was his vision.

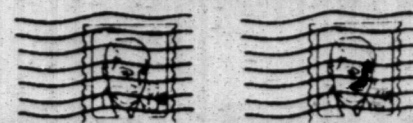
Mohler is president of Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

There are few threats more perilous for the evangelical church than theological seminaries set adrift from theological accountability."

— Albert Mohler



Letters to the editor



Grateful for renewal

Editor:

As a Southern Baptist pastor and a five-point Calvinist, please allow me to assure my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that

the resurgence of the Doctrines of Grace in Southern Baptist life is no threat to our mandate to preach Christ at home and around the world. [Kevin] Waller's letter of Dec. 22, 1994, describes the extreme views of hyper-Calvinist

theology. Often times these extreme views are put forth in an attempt to cause hysteria. Any misrepresentation of our historical connections as Southern Baptists with the Doctrines of Grace only serves to spread more confusion

and misinformation in our churches.

If the doctrines of Calvin were such a threat to missions and evangelism, then why is it that so many of our Southern Baptist forefathers adopted these same doctrines as their own. Basil Manly Sr., W.B. Johnson (first president of the SBC), R.B.C. Howell (second president of the SBC), P.H. Mell, J.P. Boyce (founder and first president of Southern Seminary), B.H. Carroll (founder and president of Southwestern Seminary), and countless other Southern Baptist visionaries were all five-point Calvinists and yet were all deeply committed to personal evangelism and missions.

I for one, am grateful to our sovereign Lord for the return of many Baptists to our theological and historical Southern Baptist roots. I believe that a better understanding of these doctrines would go a long way in strengthening our commitment as a denomination to reaching the lost for Christ. Two books in particular were helpful in broadening my understanding: *By His Grace and For His Glory*, by Thomas J. Nettles, and Robert B. Selph's *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election*.

J. Shawn Kinsey, pastor
Doty Chapel Church
Shannon

could be further from the truth. Modern missions was born and bred in Calvinistic doctrine. Furthermore, if Calvinists don't believe in missions, someone forgot to tell that wonderful group of Calvinists who met in Augusta, Ga., in 1845 to form our Convention. Their express purpose was for the propagation of the gospel around the world.

Terrell Suggs
Union

Cartoons available

Editor:

I have prepared a series of 10 cartoons which illustrate points Paul makes in Galatians. I plan to put them on transparencies and use on an overhead projector when I teach the epistle to our people.

I will be happy to send a set of these cartoons to anyone free of charge. Send \$2 for postage and handling to me at First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1357, Kenner, LA 70063-1357.

Joe McKeever

Advocate of neglected

Editor:

On behalf of the often-neglected segment of our society who reside in nursing homes or swing bed sections in local hospitals or in retirement homes, I plead with Mississippi Baptists to reach out "to the least of these."

These facilities contain an often unnoticed and forgotten mission field at our doorstep. Perhaps we cannot go overseas, but we can all do missions. In fact, a person of any age can visit a nursing home and small children are by far the favorites of the residents.

If you want to begin this type of ministry or are already doing it and would like literature designed specifically for nursing home residents, you can contact: The Sunshine Society, P.O. Box 327, Lynwood, WA 98036. This organization produces giant print hymnals, sing-along tapes with old favorite hymns, and giant print tracts. Our church placed these materials in our local facilities and they have been warmly received.

Bill Kent Jr., pastor
Providence Church
Meadville

On protecting killers

Editor:

I can't imagine our government protecting the nurses and doctors that go into the abortion clinics and kill little babies. These are poor little innocent and helpless babies who have no one to protect them. How can these professionals sleep nights, knowing that they are murdering God's little children? Murder is murder, no matter how you look at it. On judgment day God will take care of all this. You will have to stand before God and give account of what you have done.

Montell Crowson
Cedar Bluff

Also thankful

Editor:

How thankful I am to be a part of the growing number of Southern Baptist Calvinists. I applaud Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary; Timothy George, president of Beeson School of Divinity; and many others like them who are contending for the faith by seeking to recover the doctrine of free and sovereign grace.

Such outstanding men as W.B. Johnson, R.B.C. Howell, Richard Fuller — first, second and third presidents of the SBC, respectively — were strong Calvinists. J.P. Boyce, founder of Southern Seminary; D.L. Dagg, John Broadus, Basil Manly Jr. and Sr., E.C. Dargan, J.B. Tidwell, F.K. Kerfoot, J.B. Gambrell, P.H. Mell, W.T. Conner, and many other giants of our past were outspoken Calvinists. Even Lottie Moon is included in this "great cloud of witnesses." Other Calvinistic Baptists who influenced the shaping of our Convention were Benjamin Keach, John Bunyan, Matthew Henry, Isaac Backus, John Newton, Andrew Fuller, William Carey, Luther Rice, Adoniram Judson, and C.H. Spurgeon. The list could go on and on. Only a superficial study will prove my point.

Whether Calvinism is believed or not, Southern Baptists owe it an enormous debt of gratitude. We deeply love our denomination and find it extremely ironic and hurtful when we are treated with suspicion and even declared non-Southern Baptist by some.

Many say [Calvinism] kills missions and evangelism. Nothing

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

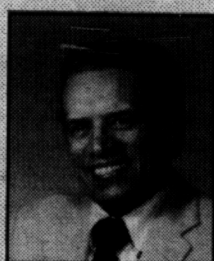
January 30-31, 1995

Temple Baptist Church, Hattiesburg

Begins: 1:30 p.m., Monday • Concludes: 9:00 p.m., Tuesday



Dr. Robert E. Naylor



Angel Martinez



Joe B. Brown



Mickey Dalrymple

1 9 9 5 Mississippi Baptist EVANGELISM CONFERENCE



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J. Gilman McKee



Jim Ponder



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Just for the Record



Ashland Church, Ashland, recently held its Acteen Recognition Service. Pictured from left are Katie Elliott, Queen, and Angela Sprayberry, Queen with Scepter.

Mississippi College will host a one-day workshop, "Cognitive Therapy of Depression: Conceptualization and Treatment," Jan. 27, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., on the MC campus in Clinton. The workshop will be led by David A. Clark and John B. Jolly, and is designed for counselors, social workers, and therapists. Cost is \$50, or \$25 for students. For more information or to pre-register, call (601) 925-3263.

Antioch Church, Pelahatchie, will observe Baptist Men's Day and High Attendance Day on Jan. 22. The day will begin with a men/boys breakfast at 8 a.m. Layman Carl Harrison will speak at 11 a.m. The men will share their testimonies at 7 p.m. Marion Spence is pastor.

Basic Conversational English Workshop will be held at the Metro (Hinds-Madison) Association

office. Cost of the workshop is \$18.75 and advance reservations are necessary. These may be made by contacting Eddie Hamilton, director of missions, 6530 Dogwood Drive, Jackson, MS 39213. Telephone: (601) 362-8676. Dates and times are Feb. 17, 6-9 p.m.; Feb. 18, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.; Feb. 24, 6-9 p.m.; and Feb. 25, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. For additional information call Martha Stockstill, (601) 366-6481 or Rene Sugg, 982-0262.

Union Church Church, Union Association, will hold a dedication service for its church building at 2 p.m. on Jan. 29. Tim Hudson is pastor.

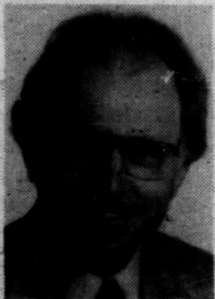
The President Search Committee of Midwestern Seminary is now receiving recommendations and resumes for the office of president. Recommendations will be received until March 15. All correspondence should be sent to: Search Committee; Attention: Chairman; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; P.O. Box 9868; Colorado Springs, CO 80932.

Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, will host a single adult conference, "Becoming a Friend and Lover," Jan. 27 from 7-9:30 p.m. and Jan. 28, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Dick Purnell, national director of Single Life Resources in Cary, N.C., will be conference leader. The \$20 fee will cover materials and refreshments. For more information, call (601) 956-5000.

Guy Stricherz, a photographic historian, is producing a book and traveling exhibition, *Americans in Kodachrome: Photographic Folk Art, 1945-1965*. To contribute Mississippi Kodachrome slides, contact him at 23 Prince Street, New York, NY 10012. Telephone: (212) 226-3399.

Staff Changes

Tom Sumrall, pastor of First Church, New Albany, since 1981, has resigned to return to the foreign mission field. His last day with the church was Jan. 15. Before going to New Albany, he and his wife Jane were missionaries in Brasilia, Brazil. They will now be serve with the International Service Corps. When not on assignment, they will reside in Hattiesburg.



Sumrall

Billy Guest has retired as pastor of Corinth Church (Simpson), effective December 1994. He is available for pulpit supply, interim, and revivals. Guest can be contacted at Rt. 2, Box 139AA, Magee, MS 39111 or call (601) 849-9536.

Mike Powell is the new pastor of Pachuta Church, Clarke Association.

Grady J. Ross has accepted the call to West Gulfport Church, Gulf Coast Association, as pastor effective Nov. 6. He attended William Carey College. Ross was licensed by Graceland Church, Vancleave, and ordained by Baxterville Church, Lumberton. He previously served churches in Hattiesburg, Lumberton, Columbus, and Poplarville.



Ross

Wiggins Church, Leake Association, has called Lonnie Myrick as its new pastor.

James Blakely of Ridgeland has been called as interim at First Church, Braxton, Simpson County.

Freney Church, Leake Association, has called John Adams as its pastor effective the first Sunday in January.

Gary Richardson began his ministry as pastor at First Church, West Point, the last Sunday in October. His previous place of service was Edgewater Church, New Orleans.



Richardson

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First Church, Hazlehurst, marks 125th anniversary

First Church, Hazlehurst, will celebrate 125 years of ministry during the month of February.

Two projects of importance have been planned: a pictorial church directory, and a 125th anniversary print by Sandra Deaton.

February worship services will focus on the various age groups within the church and include something about the ministry of the church to that particular group. Personal testimonies, music, and messages will highlight the worship experiences.

Sunday, Feb. 26, will be the closing day of the celebration. Worship services that day will begin at 10:30 a.m. Bill Causey, executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, will be the guest speaker. The service will include a presentation by the Historical Commission. A music concert featuring present and former organists and ministers of music will be held at 2:30 p.m. The church will host a reception at 3:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Robert M. Hanvey is pastor.

Henry picks 6 parliamentarians

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP) — A team of six parliamentarians has been selected by SBC President Jim Henry to assist in business sessions of the SBC in Atlanta June 20-22.

Henry did not designate any of his six selections as chief parliamentarian.

The six parliamentarians selected by Henry are: John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Convention; Lester L. Cooper Jr., pastor of Valley Hill Church, Riverdale, Ga.; Sanford W. Peterson, president of Sanford

W. Peterson, Ph.D., Enterprises, Inc.; Jimmy E. Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Church, Huntsville, Ala.; David N. Matlock, parish juvenile judge, Shreveport, La.; Joe H. Reynolds, lawyer and member of Second Church, Houston.

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Registration fees postmarked 14 days before the workshop are: \$28 per participant, \$10 for spouse sharing materials, \$15 for full-time college or seminary students, and \$65 for three to six people from the same church, \$10 for each additional person. Full refund of registration up to the 14-day deadline. There is an additional \$10 for anyone registering at the door. Registration fee includes all materials. It does not include travel, food or lodging. To register, send this ad with your name, address and telephone number. Make checks payable to Home Mission Board and mail to Youth Evangelism Office • WOW Registration • 906 S. National Springfield, MO 65804.

February 17-18	Boonville, MS	March 3-4	Tyler, TX
March 10-11	Belle Plaine, KS	March 10-11	Pueblo, CO
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Names in the News

Thursday, January 19, 1995

BAPTIST RECORD PAGE 9

NOBTS names search committee members

Jacqueline Suzanne Ard graduated from Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, during commencement ceremonies Dec. 16. Her hometown is Jayess. The seminary inadvertently left Ard's name off a prior list of graduates.

William T. Sisk and Robert W. Andrews, both students at Mississippi College, have been awarded scholarships in the amount of \$500. Since 1977, when the program began, Hardy Church, Grenada, has awarded scholarships to 22 students pursuing an education toward Christian service. The William R. Moss Memorial Ministerial Scholarship Fund was begun under his direction. Scott Moss is the present chairman.

MEMPHIS (BP) — The Brotherhood Commission has named **Benjamin "Ben" F. Kelley Jr.** to its newly-created position of chief development officer. Kelley, who began his assignment Jan. 3, will be responsible for directing the agency's \$10 million "Opportunity Now" capital campaign.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Carl F.H. Henry, often acknowledged as the dean of American evangelical theologians, has been named senior research professor at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky. A leading figure in American evangelicalism, Henry was among the founding faculty of Fuller Theolog-

ical Seminary and also taught at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ron Wyatt, an adventurer who has searched for Noah's Ark and the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah, will speak in Jackson Feb. 4 and in Columbus and Tupelo on Feb. 5. For more information, call (601) 857-5688.

FORT WORTH (BP) — Jan Johnsonius, former Southern Baptist missionary to Argentina, has been named director of public relations, news and information for Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth. She will come to her new position in early February after a year as a special assignment writer in the Foreign Mission Board's news and information office in Richmond, Va.

FORT WORTH (BP) — Richard T. "Dick" McCartney retired as executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Radio and Television Commission effective Jan. 1. Jack Johnson, RTVC president, said McCartney will continue serving the Baptist agency as an adviser and consultant.

Thomas Allen of Pearl is available for bivocational youth ministry positions. A member of First Church, Jackson, he is enrolled at Wesley College, Florence. Allen may be reached at 3124 Eastland Dr., Pearl, MS 39208; telephone (601) 932-8747.

James Sclater and Carol Joy Sparkman, members of the Mississippi College music faculty, will present a free recital in Aven Fine Arts Auditorium on the MC campus, Jan. 24 at 8:15 p.m. For more information, call (601) 925-3440.


NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Edward D. Johnson, chairman of the trustees of New Orleans Seminary, has announced the appointment of the presidential search committee for the recommendation of a new president to replace the retiring Landrum P. Leavell II, 68.

In compliance with the seminary's constitution and bylaws, Johnson, pastor of First Church, Ocala, Fla., appointed the following 11 members: Morris L.

Anderson, chairman, pastor of First Church, Pigeon Forge, Tenn.; Fred L. Lowery, vice chairman, pastor of First Church, Bossier City, La.; E. Glynn Rhinehart, secretary, a staff survey engineer for Chevron USA Inc. from River Ridge, La.; W. Keith Huffman, previous trustee chairman, director of missions for Shoal Creek Baptist Association, Neosho, Mo.; Johnson, current trustee chairman; Arnold A.

Burk, a hospital pharmacist from Russellville, Ark.; William M. Hamm Jr., a retired mechanical contractor from Shreveport, La.; James E. Davison, owner of Davison Petroleum Products and Davison Transport, Ruston, La.; Jess Eddie Gandy, pastor of Westmoreland Church, Huntington, W. Va.; Stephen G. Forfer, student representative, from New Orleans; and Billy E. Simmons, faculty representative, professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Seminary since 1976.

Johnson said all recommendations should be sent in writing to Morris L. Anderson, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 98, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868-0098.



LifeAnswers

Ron Mumbower, Ed.D.
Minister of Counseling
First Church, Jackson

I feel left out by my friends. Sometimes I feel I have an ego problem or that I embarrass people around me. What is my real problem?

Maintaining friendships is a delicate matter and can also be a source of strength. Have you asked your friends about the "problem" — that you feel left out and think that you embarrass them? Don't ask all your friends; ask one or two friends with whom you feel most comfortable and who will be up front with you. Most people have some insecurity when relating to other people. We all have an image of how we think of ourselves and how others think of us. The key word is "image." Often, what is perceived is not real, but perception can be reality if not examined by all parties involved. Friendships can grow if we are honest about how we perceive ourselves and others. Check out your feelings to see if you are correct, and get input from others that will help you understand what is really going on.

As a married couple, we cannot agree on a religious denomination — one partner is willing

to compromise and the other is not. How can we work this out?

If one partner has already made up his/her mind, a solution agreeable to both is difficult. Talk to other couples with similar interests to find out where they attend church. The partner willing to compromise can attend the denomination of the other partner, making notes of likes and dislikes. Then, the willing partner can do the same with denominations he/she chooses, making notes of likes and dislikes. After the list is completed, present the findings to the uncompromising partner and ask what he/she is looking for in a church. You can attend separate churches a few times and pray that the Lord will show both of you exactly where he wants you serving as a couple. Don't attack or belittle the other person's church choices; look for similar features that attract both of you. Relationships require work and time to determine how each partner can be served individually; how the marriage can be strengthened corporately; and — most importantly — what God is saying to us. By all means, bathe this decision in constant prayer.

Send your counseling questions to LifeAnswers c/o The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Please be brief. Name is not required. Remember: in time of crisis, your pastor can make recommendations on your counseling needs.



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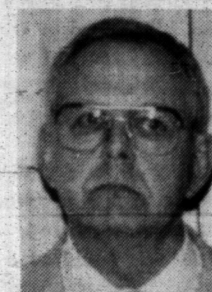
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Earnest A. Sanders, 63, dies

Services were held Jan. 15, at Military Church, Sumrall, for Earnest A. Sanders, 63, who died



Sanders

Jan. 13 at his residence. A native of Rose Hill, he had been a resident of Sumrall since 1971. Sanders served as pastor at Mt. Pleasant Church, Smith County; Antioch Church, Neshoba County; and Antioch Church in Jasper County. He went to Military Church in 1971 and served that church until his retirement in 1989.

Survivors include his wife Katie of Sumrall; two sons, Thomas of Raleigh and Terry of Sumrall; four grandchildren; two sisters, Grace Weaver of Fort Worth, Texas, and Ruby Brown of Meridian; and one brother, Lindsey Sanders of Bay Springs.

Dennis Byrd video now available

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — "Rise & Walk: The Dennis Byrd Story," an original award-winning film starring Peter Berg, which aired on Fox Night at the Movies last season, is now available for rental. It is being released by Zondervan Publishing House.

"We are excited to bring this edited and expanded version of the film to the Christian marketplace," says Billy Zeoli, president, Gospel Films. "The new epilogue features the real Dennis Byrd with an update on his recovery and a clear testimony of what Christ means in his life."

For rental information, contact Gospel Films at (800) 253-0413.

Uniform Challenged to hear



By Greg Potts
Matthew 17

The transfiguration is one of the most beautiful yet mysterious events in the life of Jesus. It more than likely took place on Mt. Hermon which is not far from Caesarea Philippi. What was the purpose of it?

It is possible that it was an answer to the prayer of our Lord. Luke tells us in his parallel account of the story, "And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that he took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray" (Luke 9:28). Why was Jesus praying? It could be that he was praying that God would reveal to his disciples that he was indeed the Son of God and reveal the nature and purpose of his mission.

What do we learn from this text?

The deity of Christ (vv. 1-2). The verb that is translated "transfigured" is the verb from which our word "metamorphosis" is derived. The word means "the act of giving outward expression to one's inward character." Due to his inner character, the disciples saw the deity of Christ. The light did not shine upon Jesus from without, but it was his deity expressing itself from within.

In Bible times, God often used miraculous means to convince people. Jesus used miracles to convince people that he was the Son of God. In the book of Acts, God often used miracles to prove to the church that others could receive the gospel. Through the transfiguration, God revealed to the disciples that Jesus was the Son of God.

However, we must be careful today that we do not ask God to perform miracles. God can still do it but he doesn't have to. Everything man needs to be saved is found in the Word of God.

The guests of the Lord (v. 3). Moses and Elijah talked with the Lord. Moses was the supreme law-giver, while Elijah was the first and greatest of the prophets. Moses represented the law and Elijah represented the prophets.

The purpose of their visit with the Lord was to verify that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Their presence reminded the disciples that the law and the prophets had foretold the coming of Jesus.

This reminds us that God's Word is true. Whatever God's Word says will happen in time. The law and the prophets had foretold the coming of the Messiah. Moses' and Elijah's presence verified that.

Is there a particular Bible promise you are experiencing difficulty believing or applying? You do not need to doubt it — God's Word is true.

The voice of the Lord (vv. 5-8). I can identify with Peter — I normally want to say something when I need to be quiet! Maybe you are like that — you tend to speak or act impulsively and often wish you had been quiet. There are many times when we do not need to say anything. We just need to listen to God.

This was one of those times and Peter blew it! But a voice came from heaven informing Peter to listen to God! Is there some decision with which you are struggling? Are you talking to the Lord about it? Are you seeking his will? If not, you should be. Spend time in God's Word and in prayer and God will lead you. He may not speak to you audibly but he will guide you in his own way.

It has been my experience that God often speaks to me through what I call "gentle nudges." Occasionally, the Lord will place a thought on my heart or mind. I believe that is the gentle nudging of the Lord. Are you listening for the Lord?

The instruction of the Lord (vv. 10-12). The disciples were confused. They had been taught that Elijah would come and then the Messiah would come (Mal. 4:5-6). Jesus told them that had happened with John the Baptist (representing Elijah) and was followed by Christ's birth.

Many attempt to pick the Bible apart looking for errors, but the Bible is true. If we live our lives according to the teaching of Scripture, we will not go wrong. We can trust the Word of God.

There is an old saying that God gave us two ears and one mouth, which indicates God expects us to listen twice as much as we talk. We need to listen to the Lord. Make a point to listen to the Lord in your daily devotional time this week.

Potts is pastor, First Church, Vancleave.

Bible Book Jeremiah's call, prophecies



By Sylvia Fleming
Jeremiah 1-6

Jeremiah, the young priest of Anathoth, received a call from God and apparently responded in a typically human manner. In essence, God said, "Don't come to me whining, you will go where I tell you and you will say what I tell you to say." God's omniscience and omnipotence were demonstrated in his call of Jeremiah. The young man was then made aware of God's knowledge. God said, "I knew you." When did God know that young man? God knew him before he was ever formed in his mother's womb. God also sanctified him and ordained him as a prophet before he was ever born.

Jeremiah was going to face great hardships; thus, God promised that he would deliver Jeremiah out of the midst of trouble and turmoil. This very decisive act set Jeremiah apart and appointed him as the spokesman of the eternal Father. This young man was given authority to speak with the voice of God. He was told to set the destruction and gloom before his people, but also to reveal that the prophecy would end with hope and joy (1:4-10).

In Chapter 3, God called his faithless sons, and they answered the call by confessing their sins. Then in Chapter 4, God set forth conditions of repentance. They were:

- 1) To come back to God;
- 2) To remove the abominations; and
- 3) To demonstrate steadfastness.

God told his people to swear by him and meet his conditions, then other nations would benefit from their beliefs and behaviors.

As God continued with the Hebrews, he spoke to Judah, including Jerusalem. Even though he was speaking to city dwellers, he told them to break up the untilled ground and root out the thorns. Repentance must never be superficial. It must involve the depths of one's being. Every crack, crevice, and cranny of the heart must be plowed, turned, and finally circumcised. Nothing must be left of the old. A totally new heart must be dedicated to the holy God for his use. Only this radical change can make one acceptable unto God (4:1-4).

God called upon his people to seek ancient paths on which to walk (6:16). He used a principle set forth in Deuteronomy 32:7 — follow the way of our fathers. They, however, refused the way of the ancient paths. That universal principle is as applicable today as it was in the lands of the ancient Hebrews. That principle was reinforced over and over in the New Testament: Matthew 11:29, John 14:6, and Acts 9:2.

The Hebrews continued to rebel against God. The roads they chose filled their houses with deceit; and as a result of their dishonesty, they lived in sinful prosperity (5:27). What Israel had come to consider normal was an abomination to God. That principle of choosing ancient roads was filled with goodness and abundant mercies of God. That same principle brought forward to the New Testament states in John 14:6, "... I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Again in John 10:9, "I am the door, by Me, if any man enter he shall be saved...."

Though God offered over and over a life that would ultimately result in comfort and ease, the Hebrews treated the prophets as if they were the problems and not the ones delivering the solutions.

God still speaks! He issues warnings constantly through his Word and through examples of other nations that have fallen. Characteristics of other fallen nations show how they devalued human life and had no recognizable moral standard. What is abominable to God had become their norm. Has it become America's also?

Fleming is an English teacher and member of Harmony Church, Louisville.

Life and Work Investigate the message



By Michael Johnson
Mark 2

Imagine for a moment that you are visiting the United States for the first time and you want to learn something about American lifestyles. Take a few moments and flip through a magazine and a newspaper. Pay particular attention to the advertisements which claim to solve a particular problem or add zest to life. What conclusions might be drawn from this brief survey regarding American values and lifestyles?

Just as Jesus shook the foundations of Jewish culture with his message, that same message stands in stark contrast to today's Madison Avenue messages of materialism and self-satisfaction.

The gospel of Mark encourages us to discover and apply God's important message to our lives.

Follow Jesus. The Jews despised the publicans — Jews who had agreed to collect Roman taxes from the Jewish people on a commission basis. As far as the pious Jews were concerned, a publican was no better than Esau who had sold his birthright for a mess of porridge. Yet it was Levi, son of Alphaeus (commonly known as Matthew), who was called by Jesus to be one of his disciples (v. 14).

It is important to note that Matthew's decision was a monumental one. By leaving his tax collector's job he had put himself out of his job forever; he would never get it back again.

The message of Jesus, when embraced, changes one's life. How has your life changed since you decided to follow Christ?

Invite sinners. Why would Jesus call this man to be a disciple? Why would Jesus even associate with such people? These are the questions running through the Pharisees' minds as the scene in verses 15-17 unfolds. Matthew hosts a dinner where other "tax collectors and sinners" were invited to mark his decision of leaving the tax collecting and beginning the soul winning business. The truth of the matter is that Jesus is always found with the outcasts of society. Jesus sees beyond the current status of an individual and sees the potential for spiritual growth and greatness.

Jesus also responds directly to the Pharisees by indicating that a doctor goes where he is needed. In other words Jesus could not do anything for one who thinks himself so good that he does not need anything done for him. The Pharisees were so caught up in a self-righteous attitude that they were spiritually blinded to their own need. Is there something in your life causing spiritual blindness?

Celebrate Jesus' presence. Fasting is a legitimate spiritual discipline. It is a natural outcome of prayer and spiritual growth. The Pharisees, however, had turned the biblical admonition to fast once a year (Day of Atonement) into a ritual to be observed twice a week. While fasting was to be seen as an outgrowth of joyous fellowship with God, it had become institutionalized into a meaningless activity.

Allowances were made, however, for special events such as weddings. Fasting rules were abandoned and a time of joyous feasting followed. Life with Christ is a joyous adventure to be enjoyed every day.

Experience a new freedom. The joy of the kingdom of God which is being portrayed through Jesus' teachings was the kind of joy that the Pharisees had lost. The Pharisees had become spiritually neurotic, never able to live up to their unrealistic spiritual expectations.

Our religious lifestyle should be characterized by joy. We often take ourselves too seriously. The gospel offers us new perspectives, new opportunities, and new ways of telling the good news. Jesus' message offers us a better kind of life if we are willing to abandon the old way of life and embrace the new.

Johnson is associate professor of Christian education at Mississippi College, Clinton.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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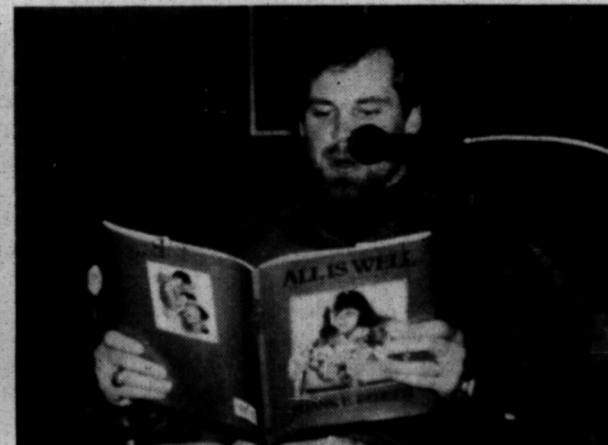
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Mr. Bob Wilson
Kolola Springs BC, Caldeonia
Mrs. Floyd Griffin
Mr. Houston Wanslow
Mr. & Mrs. D. S. Bowering
Mr. Bill Withers
Mr. & Mrs. E. L. Bennett Jr.
Maurice E. Wright
Mr. & Mrs. Leroy Thomas
Southwest Community College
Mr. Harmon Yarber
Dr. & Mrs. James W. Lewis
(to be continued)

Christmas Flashback

Numerous individuals and groups made Christmas 1994 a special time in the lives of children on each of The Baptist Children's Village campuses. Only the faces and hearts of delighted children of all ages can truly tell the story of the love and thankfulness that was felt around the state. Only a few are represented here. Many thanks to each of you who remembered your Village family in this way.



For the third consecutive year Southern Farm Bureau (above) has generously provided a wonderful Christmas party for young people on our India Nunnery Campus. Employees work together to prepare stockings and gifts for Santa to deliver to each child while they are enjoying a festive holiday spread of Christmas goodies.



Chaplain Chip Price (above) captivates Village young people (left) with a beautiful Christmas message in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the season.

Israeli Jews increasingly accepting Christ as Savior

JERUSALEM (BP) — So many Israeli Jews are becoming Christians that Southern Baptist workers in Israel say the growth, if it continues, could be the top story not only of this decade — but of the age as well.

Estimates on the number of Messianic Jews — as Jewish believers call themselves — now range from 3,000 to 6,000. They belong to more than three dozen congregations scattered across Israel. One new congregation is started each year, on average.

While the numbers remain relatively small for a country of about 5.5 million people, this is not just any country. It is Israel, the small nation whose roots are inextricably linked with the Bible.

For centuries Jews have been unresponsive to the gospel; even one person's decision to follow Christ has been a major event and cause for rejoicing among Christians. These days there's much more rejoicing, because decisions are happening more often. Southern Baptist workers in Israel have issued a plea for increased prayer support during 1995, specifically for Jewish evangelism.

Messianic Jews say they numbered perhaps 200 in Israel 25 years ago — and they kept a low profile. Now they routinely hold evangelistic crusades in which they distribute tracts and share their faith with passers-by, resulting in consistent growth.

Several church and evangelistic groups in Israel report slow but steady growth. Most Messianic Jewish congregations avoid denominational labels to make the



A JOYFUL NOISE — Under the watchful eyes of Israeli police snipers on rooftops, Messianic Jews dance and sing their way along in the Jerusalem March, an annual parade through West Jerusalem. More than 200 Jewish believers who accept Christ as the Messiah took part in the recent parade with some 20,000 Jews from around the world. It is held in conjunction with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Messianic Jews have taken part in the march only in recent years as their numbers — and evangelistic fervor — have increased. Messianic Jews in Israel now number between 3,000 and 6,000. Their continued growth will bring a new twist to Israel's complex religious and political scene. (BP photos by Don Rutledge)

gospel message more appealing to other Jews. Also, many of the congregations are charismatic, although there are signs some may be moving away from that.

One modern phenomenon making more Jews receptive to the gospel: a new custom of Jewish citizens traveling overseas when they complete their terms of military service. As they travel in Christian lands, many hear the gospel for the first time, and in a more relaxed atmosphere than possible in Israel.

Some of the hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews who have arrived in Israel in recent years also believe in Christ. They can be found in congregations throughout Israel. Increasing numbers of them have sought baptism.

During the Jerusalem March — a major parade held in the heavily Jewish western part of the city last September — some 200 Messianic Jews marched amidst 20,000 Jews from around the world. The annual observance, held in conjunction with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, has more to do with civic pride than religion, since many marchers are sponsored by local corporations.

But the Messianic Jewish group was extremely conspicuous as they marched along Jaffa Road with banners, T-shirts emblazoned with their name and gospel messages. Led by women wearing brightly spangled costumes, they carried loudspeakers broadcasting Christian music.

Most of the parade watchers paid them no more attention than other marching groups. But in several locations Orthodox Jews, clearly upset that the Messianic Jews were there, shouted angrily. Some approached the marchers with hands raised as if to strike out, but were calmed by

policemen.

Oddly, the scene mirrors Israel today. An estimated 80% of the population shuns Jewish Orthodoxy; only a relatively small percentage of the people are devoutly and actively religious.

But just as militant Muslims persecute Christian believers among the Arabs, Orthodox Jews can be a fearsome force, dedicated to rooting out Jewish Christianity, which they abhor as a heretical deviation.

When Narkis Street Baptist Congregation in Jerusalem held an open house during the Feast of Tabernacles late in 1994, about 30 Orthodox Jews came to debate church leaders and tried to urge visiting Jews to leave. Many congregation members responded by presenting their Christian testimonies.

Narkis Street Congregation has about 250 members in its English-language, international congregation, plus another 80 people who worship in a Hebrew-language congregation. A group of Russian immigrants also meets during the

Questions remain open in evangelizing Abraham's children

TEL AVIV, Israel (BP) — Even the term "Jewish evangelism" is a problem for some people, acknowledges Southern Baptist representative Jim Sibley in Israel.

Sibley wants to see evangelism among Jews have a higher profile in Southern Baptist life. He especially wants Southern Baptists to pray intensively for Jewish evangelism in the years ahead. But he also wants Southern Baptists to lay aside some faulty ideas on the topic.

"Jews aren't a hidden people — they're a people in hiding," he said. "They have avoided having contact with the gospel."

Sibley, from Dallas, first encountered Jews in south Florida, where he was a pastor for eight years, but had limited contacts with them. Yet from the age of 14 he had felt a spiritual call to share the gospel with them.

"It became a real passion and a real burden," he recalled.

Scripture gave him a love for Israel and a burden for the Jewish people. He and his wife Kathy have represented Southern Baptists in Israel the past 12 years. In recent years Sibley has worked with a Messianic Jewish congregation in the Tel Aviv area.

Jewish believers (Christians) in Israel refer to themselves as "Messianic Jews," to indicate people who have a Jewish background but have trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior — generally without following the traditions of rabbinical Judaism.

Linking the terms "Jewish" and "believer" bothers some people, but not Sibley.

"When a Mexican believes in Jesus, he's a Mexican believer.

When a man from China believes in Jesus, he's a Chinese believer. So, when a Jew believes in Jesus, why shouldn't he be a Jewish believer?"

Southern Baptists have had workers in Israel since before the modern state was founded in 1948, but Sibley sees reluctance among some Southern Baptists and other Christians to give Jewish evangelism a high profile.

Sibley counters those who say Jews don't need Jesus because of God's covenant with Abraham. He contends that Acts 4:12 and John 8:56, among many other New Testament verses, make it abundantly clear that salvation for the Jewish people depends on a faith relationship with Christ, too.

week with church leaders.

Aggressive evangelism efforts directed at the Russian immigrants likely would draw the ire of both Orthodox Jews and the Israeli government.

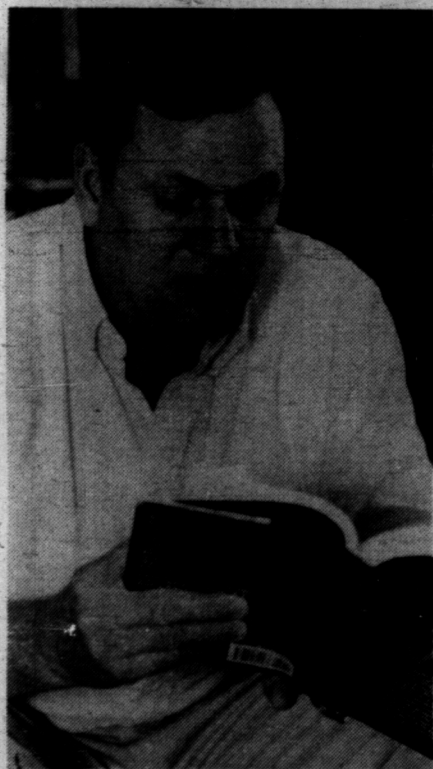
"Narkis Street isn't reaching out to the Russians, yet some have come," Southern Baptist representative Pat Hoaldrige said. "We include them and encourage them to learn Hebrew and get involved with the people who have formed the roots of the society here. If they don't learn Hebrew, they don't get jobs and don't get integrated."

Both Messianic Jews and those who work with them remain cautious because of the obvious dangers. They have endured an assortment of attacks and threats

through the years, especially between 1972 and 1982.

Even today most Israelis know the name of Jesus only as "Yeshu," rather than his correct Hebrew name, "Yeshua." Few are aware that "Yeshu" comes from an ancient rabbinical acronym of three Hebrew letters which form the phrase, "May his name be cursed."

Messianic Jews refer to Jesus by his correct name. They're convinced many more Israelis will meet their beloved Yeshua in the days ahead.



EXPERIENCING GOD — In Jerusalem, Southern Baptist representative John Anthony reviews a point of Jewish doctrine in a book. A 21-year veteran of ministry in Israel, Anthony is elated at the growth in the number of Jewish believers in Israel — the Messianic Jews. Under Anthony's direction the Southern Baptist book *Experiencing God* is being translated into Russian and taught to Russian-speaking believers in Jerusalem. Plans also call for distributing it in the former Soviet Union and other areas where Russian speakers live.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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KOZEZ ZUAT ESMY LAH, AC MLYE RUSZM
PODAOGO, UDD MLASIZ UNO BYZZAPDO MY LAH
MLUM PODAGOGML.

HUNX SASO: MQOSMF-MLNOO

This week's clue: Y equals O.

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Six: Twenty-One.

Baptist Record

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